

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 **“Brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, <sup>2</sup> for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup> While people are saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. <sup>4</sup> But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. <sup>5</sup> You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. <sup>6</sup> So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.”**

Dear Christians expectantly waiting for Jesus:

In Washington D.C., on Capitol Hill, in the Library of Congress, on one of its walls, there is written an inscription from a poem penned by Alfred Lord Tennyson. It says, **“One God, one law, one element, and one far-off divine event toward which the whole creation moves.”** What is this **“one far-off divine event toward which the whole creation moves?”** You and I know it as The Last Day or Judgment Day.

Why do you suppose that inscription is there in our nation’s capital? It is meant to be a reminder about the way we direct the affairs of our nation. We are always to keep in mind that we are not just living and deciding things for today -- but for the future, and, ultimately, for eternity. In other words, a Day of Reckoning is coming. We are all responsible to a God who is infinitely much greater and holier than we are.

Today we are going to talk about that **“far-off, divine event”** -- if, in fact, it is far-off. It may be closer than any of us realize. Paul encourages us to **“Remember the Day of the Lord.”** (1) **Remember that it will be unexpected,** and (2) **Remember to prepare for the unexpected.**

## 1

Some folks don’t like thinking or hearing about the Last Day. To many it may seem scary or morbid. But it’s amazing to see how often Jesus and the apostle Paul speak about Christ’s 2<sup>nd</sup> coming in the Bible. While it may be Doomsday for some, for believers it will be a day of great rejoicing and the fulfillment of promises.

Paul says, **“Brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, <sup>2</sup> for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup> While people are saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.”** In other words, when the Last Day comes, it’ll come **“in a flash, in ‘the twinkling of an eye’** (1 Cor. 15:52). A thief doesn’t call a household and announce that he’ll stop by about midnight to remove their valuables. And God does not forecast the moment of his return. It doesn’t pay to make predictions. Certainly, God gives us *signs* to remind us of his coming and this earth’s temporary nature: wars, famines, pandemics, hurricanes, etc. But the end of this world could happen before this service concludes, or it could happen in 1,000 years or more. Any time since the fall of Jerusalem, as Jesus prophesied and later happened in 70AD, this world could have come to a screeching halt.

Why is Paul having us think about the Last Day? Because we humans have a tendency to forget about this important event and put it out of our minds. We often take our days here for granted -- as we are all painfully learning through this pandemic. We nonchalantly think things will just keep going on forever the way they are now. **“While people are saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ destruction will come on them suddenly,”** Paul writes. And then it will be too late. Without faith in Christ -- and through him the forgiveness of sins -- there is no hope, no future, and no happy result on Judgment Day.

## 2

So the Lord reminds us to be prepared for that unexpected day. He loves us and his desire is that we spend eternity with him. Paul writes, **“But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. <sup>5</sup> You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not be-**

*long to the night or to the darkness. <sup>6</sup> So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled."*

Paul says, "You're not in the dark. You've been enlightened! By God's Word you know who forgives you and gives you life." Therefore, in light of this knowledge and gift, ***"Let us not be like others...but let us be alert and self-controlled."*** In other words, we need to stay alert. We can't fall asleep at the spiritual wheel and go crashing down the embankment and lose our eternal lives!

Some years ago I remember reading about a company in New York that manufactured bullet-proof glass that had been burglarized. How did the burglar get in? He smashed the glass on the business's front door! The business owner said it had never occurred to him to put safety glass in their own front door.

We're all going, "Well, duh." But does Satan say the same about us sometimes? How many times doesn't God warn us about Satan, and yet we must admit we keep on letting our guards down. For example, Peter writes, ***"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him!"*** (1 Peter 5:8-9). So we know he's hunting us like a lion hunts his prey. We know his tactics -- his lies, his half-truths, his stealth. Yet, how many times don't you and I fall for the same old tricks and say about our sins, *"Duh! It should have been so easy to avoid that, yet I didn't!"*

Where do we get the ability and strength to escape the devil and stand against him? Do you remember what Jesus used when Satan tempted him in the wilderness? God's Word! Every time the devil pulled out his weapon of lies and deceptions to attack, Jesus struck him down with the Word of God. It is ***"the full armor of God,"*** the ***"sword of the Spirit,"*** and ***"the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one"*** that Paul talks about in Ephesians 6.

A Detroit taxi driver was asked to give a 15 minute TV interview about safe driving. He had logged almost 1 million miles without an accident. He said, ***"It won't take me 15 minutes to tell you how to avoid accidents on the road. It's simple: Just drive on the theory that every other person on the road is blind!"*** There is defensive driving -- and there is also defensive living.

Just think of the troubles we could avoid if we lived each day with this thought in mind: *"This is the day the Lord might return."* Can we get up each morning with this thought in mind? *"Maybe today I will see Jesus?"* Here is what Martin Luther once said: ***"Even if I knew the world would end tomorrow, I would nevertheless plant an apple tree today. Let us live as though Christ were crucified yesterday, risen today, and coming again tomorrow."*** Well said, Dr. Luther. Well said.

Amen.